United Nations CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Singapore*

1. The Committee considered the fifth periodic report of Singapore (CEDAW/C/SGP/5) at its 1534th and 1535th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1534 and CEDAW/C/SR.1535), held on 25 October 2017. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/SGP/Q/5 and the responses of Singapore are contained in CEDAW/C/SGP/Q/5/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its fifth periodic report. It also appreciates the information provided by the State party in follow-up to the concluding observations on its fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1/Add.1) and the written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its large and multisectoral delegation, which was headed by the Senior Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Education, Muhammad Faishal bin Ibrahim Khan Surattee. The delegation also included additional representatives of the Ministry of Social and Family Development and representatives of the Ministry of Manpower, the Attorney-General's Chambers, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. The Committee appreciates the open and constructive dialogue that took place between the delegation and the members of the Committee.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2011 of the State party's fourth periodic report (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-eighth session (23 October–17 November 2017).

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(a) Women's Charter (Amendment) Act 2016, which enables married and divorced women and men below 21 years of age to seek protection from family violence for themselves and their children;

(b) Protection from Harassment Act, which strengthens protection from harassment within and outside the workplace, in 2014;

(c) Prevention of Human Trafficking Act 2014, which criminalizes trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour or trade in organs;

(d) Employment, Parental Leave and Other Measures Act 2013, which extends maternity protection to the full duration of pregnancy;

(e) Administration of Justice (Protection) Act 2016, which makes disobedience of maintenance orders punishable as contempt of court.

5. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following international instruments:

(a) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2015;

(b) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2013.

6. The Committee notes with appreciation the initiatives taken by the State party to promote gender equality and protect the rights of women, such as the introduction of two weeks of paid paternity leave, the establishment of the Diversity Action Committee to address the issue of the underrepresentation of women on corporate boards, the extension of facilities for the care of children and of older persons in order to support those with caregiving responsibilities and the introduction of religious edicts to secure the financial welfare of Muslim women and their dependants by providing increased options in inheritance matters.

C. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.**

D. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Reservations

8. The Committee welcomes the partial withdrawal of the State party's reservations to article 2 (g), article 11 (1) and article 16 (1) (b) and (d)–(g) of the Convention, as well as the measures taken to align its legislation with the provisions thereof. Nevertheless, the Committee notes with concern the State party's remaining reservations to article 2 (a)–(f), article 16 (1) (a), (c) and (h) and (2), which are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention and the obligation of the State party to promote and protect the rights of all women, including women who belong to religious minorities. It is also concerned about the lack of measures taken by the State party to withdraw its reservations to article 11 (2) of the Convention.

9. **The Committee recommends that the State party demonstrate its commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women by withdrawing its remaining reservations to articles 2, 11 and 16 within a clear time frame in order to ensure the full applicability of the Convention in the State party.**

Constitutional and legislative framework

10. The Committee notes the consistent position of the State party that the principle of equality of all persons before the law is enshrined in article 12 (1) of the Constitution and that the principle of non-discrimination is broadly encompassed and affirmed therein. Nevertheless, the Committee reiterates its concern about the absence of a specific definition of discrimination against women in the State party's legislation, in accordance with article 1 of the Convention, in particular in the light of the decision of the Court of Appeal of 28 October 2014, which ruled that the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds listed explicitly in article 12 (2) only, namely religion, race, descent or place of birth, and thus excludes the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender.

11. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/3, para. 14, and CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 12) that the State party incorporate into its Constitution or other appropriate legislation a definition of discrimination against women and provisions to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in the private and public spheres as well as intersecting forms of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

12. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Inter-Ministry Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, mandated to oversee the implementation of the Convention in the State party, and of its secretariat, the Office for Women's Development of the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information on specific measures taken by the Inter-Ministry Committee to implement the Convention and the previous recommendations of the Committee. It is also concerned about the lack of information on the monitoring mechanisms in place to track progress and ensure that gender mainstreaming is consistently applied in the development and implementation of all laws, policies and programmes in all ministries and legislative structures.

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party take specific measures to ensure that its national machinery:**

(a) **Adopts a specific action plan, with the active participation of civil society, to implement the Committee's recommendations and the Convention with a view to achieving gender equality in a comprehensive and effective manner and within a human rights framework;**

(b) **Improves the collection of data, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and nationality, in order to identify specific areas where women continue to be underrepresented or disadvantaged and to assess the impact of the measures adopted;**

(c) **Applies gender mainstreaming consistently in the development and implementation of all laws, policies and programmes in all ministries and legislative structures.**

National human rights institution

14. The Committee regrets the lack of progress made in implementing its previous recommendation to establish an independent national human rights institution within a clear time frame and remains concerned that a governmental body such as the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights is not an appropriate substitute, given its lack of independence.

15. **The Committee reiterates its recommendation (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 36) that the State party establish, within a clear time frame, an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles), with a broad mandate to promote and protect women's rights and gender equality.**

Temporary special measures

16. The Committee notes the reiteration of the State party's position that temporary special measures in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged are not required because it adheres to the principles of meritocracy and the equality of opportunities for women and men. The Committee is concerned about the limited understanding on the part of the State party regarding the nature and meaning of temporary special measures under the Convention and the purported futility of and the negative perception by women regarding such measures, notwithstanding the fact that substantive equality between women and men has not been achieved in various areas of the Convention, including public and political life and employment. As indicated in its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee stresses that such measures are designed to fulfil the specific goal of creating an enabling environment to achieve equality of results, and that the principle of meritocracy is compatible with the goal of temporary special measures to achieve gender balance.

17. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/3, para. 20, and CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 20) that the State party:**

(a) **Raise the awareness of all relevant officials of the concept of temporary special measures set out in article 4 (1) of the Convention, as elaborated in the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, which, inter alia, clarifies that the aim of such measures is to accelerate the achievement of the substantive equality of women and men, and to effect the structural, social and cultural changes necessary to correct past and current discrimination against women;**

(b) **In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, apply temporary special measures, such as outreach or support programmes, targeted recruitment, hiring and promotion, quotas and numerical goals associated with time frames, in areas in which women continue to be underrepresented or disadvantaged, including public and political life and employment.**

Stereotypes and discriminatory practices

18. The Committee welcomes the measures adopted by the State party to encourage fathers to break out of traditional roles and stereotypes to embrace greater parenting responsibilities. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes about the role of women as primary caregivers, including as caregivers of older persons, and the continued use of the concept of "head of household", which reflects a hierarchical view of the family.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures aimed at increasing the availability and accessibility of professional caregiver services to enable women to expand their role beyond caregiving and to combat discriminatory stereotypes about women's and men's roles in the family and in society;**

(b) **Eliminate the concept of "head of household" in all policymaking and decision-making, as previously recommended by the Committee (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 22 (b)), and continue to take initiatives that build equal partnerships and promote the sharing of responsibilities in the family.**

Gender-based violence against women

20. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to enhance the legal protection of women from gender-based violence, including by amending the Women's Charter Act in 2016. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) The lack of statistical data on all forms of gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by age, nationality and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, as well as on the number of complaints received, investigations conducted, prosecutions and convictions, and the sentences imposed on perpetrators;

(b) The underreporting of cases of gender-based violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, owing to stigma and to the lack of understanding of gender-based violence among both the population at large and law enforcement officials;

(c) The lack of legislative reforms made since the previous review, in 2011, to effectively criminalize domestic violence and marital rape and ensure that the definition of rape includes any non-consensual sexual act;

(d) The disproportionately high burden of proof required when married or divorced women apply for personal protection orders because of marital abuse and domestic violence, and the fact that women who are not married cannot apply for personal protection orders as a consequence of intimate partner violence;

(e) The fact that corporal punishment continues to be legal under section 89 of the Penal Code, section 64 the Women's Charter, section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Licensing of Homes) Regulations 2011 and section 24 of the Children and Young Persons (Government Homes) Regulations 2011.

21. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and its previous recommendations (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 24), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Systematically collect data on gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by age, nationality and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, as well as on the number of complaints about gender-based violence against women, investigations, prosecutions and convictions, and the sentences imposed on perpetrators;**

(b) **Provide mandatory and recurring capacity-building programmes to members of the judiciary, lawyers and law enforcement officers, including forensic medical personnel, as well as legislators and health-care professionals, to**

equip them to apply relevant criminal law provisions strictly in cases of gender-based violence against women and to treat victims in a gender-sensitive manner;

(c) **Revise its Penal Code and its Criminal Procedure Code to criminalize domestic violence and marital rape specifically and ensure that the definition of rape includes any non-consensual sexual act;**

(d) **Ease the burden of proof for married or divorced women applying for personal protection orders, given that such orders are not findings of criminal liability but interim orders to desist from violence;**

(e) **Adopt measures to ensure that unmarried women are effectively protected from intimate partner violence, including by extending the applicability of personal protection orders;**

(f) **Revise section 89 of the Penal Code, section 64 of the Women's Charter, section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Licensing of Homes) Regulations 2011 and section 24 of the Children and Young Persons (Government Homes) Regulations 2011 to prohibit and eliminate the corporal punishment of children, including girls, in all settings.**

Trafficking

22. The Committee acknowledges the significant efforts made by the State party to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned that the State party continues to be a destination and transit country for trafficking in women and girls for purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. It expresses particular concern about:

(a) The lack of definition, in the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act 2014, of key terms relating to trafficking, such as forced labour, deception and coercion, which hinders the effective identification of victims and perpetrators;

(b) The lack of access to sufficient measures of support and protection on the part of victims of trafficking, including to the right to opportunities for decent work, shelters providing adequate services to victims and physical and psychosocial recovery services and facilities;

(c) The absence of legislation regulating the foreign bride trade, which may involve trafficking in women and girls.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act 2014 to ensure its full compliance with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;**

(b) **Continue to provide capacity-building programmes to the judiciary, law enforcement officers, border control officers, social workers and health workers with respect to the early identification and referral of victims of trafficking as well as gender-sensitive investigation methods;**

(c) **Ensure that victims of trafficking are provided with adequate protection and support, including by establishing separate, well-equipped shelters with trained staff to address their specific needs and concerns;**

(d) **Ensure that traffickers and other actors involved in trafficking are effectively identified, prosecuted and adequately punished;**

(e) **Intensify international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination, in particular with countries in the**

region, including by exchanging information and harmonizing legal procedures for prosecuting traffickers, to prevent trafficking.

Participation in political and public life

24. The Committee notes the progress made in the representation of women in Parliament, as well as the appointment of the first female President in 2017. Nevertheless, it remains concerned that female candidates face gender stereotypes in the media and among politicians, and that women continue to be underrepresented in ministerial posts, the judiciary, the police and the diplomatic service, in particular at decision-making levels.

25. **Recalling its previous recommendation (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 28), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt laws and policies aimed at the promotion of women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of political and public life and adopt measures to that end, including temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 and general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life;**

(b) **Increase the availability of training and capacity-building programmes for women wishing to enter political life or hold public office, and continue to encourage the media to ensure that women and men who are candidates or elected representatives receive equal visibility, especially during election periods;**

(c) **Raise awareness among politicians, the media, traditional leaders and the general public that the full, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the effective implementation of the Convention, as well as for the political stability and economic development of the country.**

Education

26. The Committee commends the State party for the progress made in the education of girls and women, as reflected in their high levels of literacy and educational attainment. Nevertheless, it notes that women still remain underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, such as engineering, electronics and information technology, at the tertiary level. It also expresses its concern that sex education in public schools is based on abstinence until marriage, with limited information provided about sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the use of contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. The Committee is also concerned that such a restrictive approach may lead to negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes with regard to the sexuality of adolescents.

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Encourage girls to choose non-traditional fields of study and career paths, such as engineering, electronics and information technology, and take measures to eliminate traditional stereotypes and structural barriers, which may deter girls from enrolling in those fields;**

(b) **Modify the current school curricula to include age-appropriate education in sexual and reproductive health, including in responsible sexual behaviour and important concepts such as consent, gender-based violence and the prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases;**

(c) **Address negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes with regard to the sexuality of adolescents.**

Employment

28. The Committee welcomes the initiatives introduced by the State party to reconcile the private and professional lives of women, such as the WorkPro scheme, which provides financial incentives to employers to implement flexible work arrangements, leave schemes to support parents, the establishment of more childcare facilities and the extension of maternity leave to unmarried women. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) The continued vertical and horizontal occupational segregation in both the public and private sectors;

(b) The persistent gender wage gap in all occupational categories, except clerical support;

(c) The underrepresentation of women on corporate boards, notwithstanding their high educational and professional achievements and qualifications.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt effective measures, including the provision of training and incentives for women to work in traditionally male-dominated fields of employment, in order to combat horizontal occupational segregation in both the public and private sectors;**

(b) **Systematically review the obstacles to women's access to decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors and adopt holistic and gender-sensitive measures to remove those barriers, in order to combat vertical occupational segregation;**

(c) **Reduce the gender wage gap by regularly reviewing wages in sectors in which women are concentrated and by establishing effective monitoring and regulatory mechanisms for employment and recruitment to ensure that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is adhered to in all sectors;**

(d) **Strengthen measures aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of professional and private life, including extending the length of paternity leave, so as to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and collecting gender-disaggregated data on the use of flexible working arrangements to monitor and increase the number of women opting for those arrangements.**

Sexual harassment in the work place

30. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Protection from Harassment Act in 2014, as well as the issuance of the Tripartite Advisory on Managing Workplace Harassment in 2015, to increase employers' and employees' awareness of the remedies under the Act. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned about reports of the low number of applications for protection orders under the Act owing to costly and burdensome procedures and about the lack of effective implementation of the Tripartite Advisory.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that victims of sexual harassment in the workplace have access to effective complaints procedures, protection measures and recourse to remedies, including by reviewing the obstacles to obtaining protection orders under the Protection from Harassment Act and ensuring the implementation of the Tripartite**

Advisory on Managing Workplace Harassment by all employers. It also recommends that the State party ensure that all complaints are effectively investigated and that the perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished.

Economic empowerment of women and impact of financial policies

32. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to eliminate discrimination against women in areas of economic life, including the amendment of the Income Tax Act in 2010 to extend eligibility for tax relief to married women. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that the State party's financial policies and rules on corporate reporting and taxation may have a negative extraterritorial impact on the ability of other States, in particular those already short of revenue, to mobilize the maximum resources available for the advancement of women's rights in their respective countries.

33. **In line with its general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party undertake independent, participatory and periodic impact assessments of the extraterritorial effects of its financial and corporate tax policies on women's rights and substantive equality, ensuring that those assessments are conducted impartially, with public disclosure of the methodology used and the findings.**

Women migrant domestic workers

34. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State party to enhance its protection of the rights of women migrant domestic workers, including legislative amendments to impose harsher penalties on employers who breach work pass conditions under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act. Nevertheless, the Committee reiterates its previous concerns that:

(a) The Employment Act, which guarantees basic labour rights with regard to issues such as working hours, paid sick leave and paid annual leave, does not cover migrant domestic workers;

(b) There are ongoing allegations that many women who are migrant domestic workers continue to be exploited and abused by their employers through actions that include non-payment of salary, deprivation of food and adequate rest, confiscation of personal items, such as mobile phones and passports, restrictions on freedom of movement and refusal to pay medical expenses, as well as sexual, physical, verbal and psychological abuse;

(c) No measures have been taken to repeal the law requiring migrant workers to undergo mandatory and regular testing for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, which stipulates that they be deported on the grounds of pregnancy or diagnosis of HIV.

35. **Recalling its previous recommendations (see CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/3, para. 24, and CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1, para. 32), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that women migrant domestic workers are guaranteed the same level of protection and benefits as other workers, in particular with regard to public holidays, maximum weekly working hours and regular days of rest, including by extending the applicability of the Employment Act to migrant domestic workers;**

(b) Revise the criteria allowing women migrant workers to change employers, in particular those who have experienced exploitation and abuse, without requiring them to assist in investigations or be prosecution witnesses;

(c) Repeal the law requiring work-permit holders, including migrant domestic workers, to undergo mandatory testing for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and to be deported on the grounds of pregnancy or diagnosis of HIV;

(d) Ratify the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization.

Foreign wives

36. The Committee welcomes the introduction, in 2012, of the Long-Term Visit Pass Plus scheme, which has a longer period of validity than that of the Long-Term Visit Pass and enables the foreign spouses of Singaporean citizens to work, once they obtain a letter of consent from the Ministry of Manpower, and to obtain access to health-care subsidies. Nevertheless, the Committee remains concerned that the criteria for obtaining the passes, each with its own entitlements, remain unclear, which may lead to arbitrary and discriminatory treatment. The Committee also reiterates its previous concern about the unclear and arbitrary criteria according to which foreign spouses, predominantly women, may obtain permanent residency status, which continues to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Provide the Long-Term Visit Pass Plus, ensuring the right to work and to access health-care subsidies to all foreign spouses of Singaporean citizens;

(b) Establish clear qualifying criteria for obtaining permanent residency and automatically grant that status to all foreign spouses who qualify.

Older women

38. The Committee welcomes the introduction of measures to support older persons, such as the Silver Support Scheme Act 2015, which provides quarterly subsidies to the poorest 30 per cent of Singaporean residents, and the Pioneer Generation Fund Act 2014, which provides one-time health-care subsidies to those born on or before 31 December 1949. It is, nevertheless, concerned that, because these initiatives are limited to specific groups of older persons, they are not sufficient to address the specific needs, including access to health care, of older women. The Committee notes with concern that older women frequently lack sufficient savings to sustain a living as a result of the gender pay gap, a lack of employment opportunities and their caregiving responsibilities, and are therefore forced to continue to work beyond their retirement age in low-paid and low-skilled occupations. It is also concerned about reports of stereotyping of older women.

39. **With reference to its general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and the protection of their human rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Collect, analyse and disseminate data, disaggregated by age and sex, in order to assess the situation of older women, including those belonging to minority groups and older women with disabilities, focusing on poverty, illiteracy, violence, unpaid work, including caregiving, access to health care, housing, social and economic benefits and employment;

(b) Use those data for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes, and ensure that policies and measures targeting older women take into account their specific needs;

(c) Combat discriminatory stereotypes about older women's roles as caregivers, and encourage more men to take on increased caregiving responsibilities for older persons.

Lesbians, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons

40. The Committee expresses its concern that lesbians, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons face discrimination in various areas of life and that their situation is often exacerbated by the policies of the State party, including its media policy.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that lesbians, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons are effectively protected against all forms of discrimination in law and in practice, including by undertaking educational and awareness-raising campaigns to combat discriminatory stereotypes, including in its media policies.**

Refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless women and girls

42. While noting the position of the State party that, as a small, densely populated city-State with limited land, it is not in a position to accept refugees, the Committee remains concerned about the lack of national asylum and refugee legislation and procedures, including for ensuring respect for the principle of non-refoulement, and that refugees and asylum seekers remain in detention until a durable solution is identified. It also expresses its concern about the lack of official information on the number of stateless persons in the State party and the lack of protection under the law to ensure that children born in the State party who cannot acquire another nationality automatically acquire Singaporean nationality.

43. **With reference to its general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Establish national asylum and refugee legislation and procedures, in conformity with international standards, which also ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement;

(b) Publish up-to-date statistics on the number of stateless persons in the State party, disaggregated by age, gender, ethnic origin, residence status and other relevant characteristics;

(c) Revise the law to ensure that children born in Singapore who cannot acquire another nationality are able to automatically acquire Singaporean nationality;

(d) Ratify the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto;

(e) Ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Marriage and family relations

44. While the Committee notes the steps taken by the State party to introduce amendments to the Administration of Muslim Law Act in order to harmonize it with civil law and ensure that religious practices are progressive, it remains concerned

that the State party retains reservations to articles 2 and 16 of the Convention on the grounds of protecting the rights of minorities. It is also concerned that:

(a) With regard to civil marriages, a girl under 18 years of age may marry with parental consent, a special marriage licence and permission from the Ministry of Social and Family Development;

(b) Under the Act, a woman may not marry without a wali (male next of kin), and a kadi (official of religious standing) may solemnize the marriage of a girl under the age of 18 years who has attained puberty;

(c) A Muslim man may marry up to four women without the consent of his existing wives;

(d) Muslim women are required to present some form of admissible evidence in order to be able to file for divorce, and their testimony alone is insufficient to prove grounds for divorce, while Muslim men may unilaterally repudiate a marriage without any condition or reason;

(e) In accordance with the Act, male beneficiaries are favoured in matters of inheritance;

(f) Under sections 90 and 91 of the Act, key positions and professions within the Registry of Muslim Marriages are restricted to men only.

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party undertake a comprehensive review of the Administration of Muslim Law Act, taking into account the experiences of other countries with populations of similar cultural backgrounds and with similar legal norms, to provide women with rights equal to those of men with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance. In particular, it recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Abolish exceptions to the prohibition of marriage of girls under 18 years of age with regard to civil and Muslim marriages and request the full consent of the woman in all marriages;**

(b) **Intensify its efforts to discourage and prohibit polygamy, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, and joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices;**

(c) **Ensure that women and men have equal rights to divorce, including with regard to grounds for divorce and standards of proof, and abolish the right of Muslim husbands to unilateral divorce (talaq);**

(d) **Guarantee the equal rights of women in all matters of inheritance, and provide for the equal choice of adjudication between religious and civil law regimes;**

(e) **Amend sections 90 and 91 of the Act to include women in key positions and professions within the Registry of Muslim Marriages.**

Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

46. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

47. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

48. **The Committee calls for the realization of substantive gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Dissemination

49. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

Ratification of other treaties

50. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

51. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 17 (b) and 21 (a) and (b) above.**

Preparation of the next report

52. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its sixth periodic report in November 2021. The report should be submitted on time and, in case of delay, should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

53. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.